DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 585 CS 215 953

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TITLE Improving Literacy for First Graders through Writing for Authentic Purposes and Self-Assessment.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 58p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Childrens Writing; Class Activities; *Emergent Literacy; Grade 1; Instructional Improvement; Primary Education; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); Student Development; Student Evaluation; Writing Achievement; *Writing Assignments; Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes
IDENTIFIERS *Process Approach (Writing); *Purpose (Composition)

ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to increase the literacy levels of first graders through writing daily for authentic purposes and self-assessing their work. A writing program was designed which allowed for daily authentic writing, and students were taught how to self-assess their written work. Subjects were 60 students in 3 Grade 1 classrooms in a city elementary school serving more than 400 students total. Each first-grade classroom devoted 45 minutes daily to writing for authentic purposes. Results indicated through analysis of the data that when teachers allowed time for daily authentic writing, students were active participants in their own writing process. Data also indicated that when teachers write long range plans for teaching writing, writing tends to become a daily classroom activity. Findings suggest that when teachers increase their knowledge of process writing and how to teach writing to children, students and teachers tend to engage in daily authentic writing. Further, students could be taught to self-assess their own writing after repeated modeling from the teacher. (Contains 1 table of data and 41 references; appended are a school mission statement and various forms for classroom use.) (Author/CR)

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ED 410 585

Improving Literacy for First Graders Through Writing for Authentic Purposes and Self-Assessment

by
Ann H. Shaw
Cluster 69

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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APPROVAL PAGE

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Ann H. Shaw under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

April 21, 1997
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer would like to take this opportunity to gratefully thank the support and love given to her by her husband and three children. The writer would like to thank the first grade teachers for participating in this project and the school reading specialist and principal for their support.

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Abstract

Improving Literacy for First Graders through Writing for Authentic Purposes and Self-Assessment. Shaw, Ann H.,1997: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Early Literacy/ Writing/ Assessment/ Early Childhood Education

This practicum was designed to increase the literacy level of first graders through writing daily for authentic purposes and self-assessing their work. A writing program was designed to allow for daily authentic writing. Students were taught how to self-assess their written work. This was accomplished by improving the students' knowledge of self-assessment strategies and structuring daily writing time within the school schedule.

The writer developed solution strategies focusing on increasing opportunities for daily authentic writing and student self-assessment.

Analysis of the data revealed that when teachers allowed time for daily authentic writing students were active participants in their own writing process. The data also revealed that when teachers write long range plans for teaching writing, writing tends to become a daily classroom activity. Analysis of the data also revealed that when teachers increase their knowledge of process writing and how to teach writing to children, students and teachers tend to engage in daily authentic writing. Data also revealed that students could be taught to self-assess their own writing after repeated modeling from the teacher.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Description of Community

The writer's work setting is a large public school district in a growing, and prosperous county in the southeastern section of the United States. It is the state's most populous county and has a population of more than 340,000 people. Once the community was primarily known as a textile community. Recently the area has experienced a rapid influx of foreign industrial and commercial growth that has given the county a strong economy. Community income levels range from below poverty to above the state and national averages. Today it features a highly diverse business and industrial base. The community is rapidly becoming a world engineering center. Large engineering and construction firms maintain corporate or divisional headquarters in the area. Higher education supports its emergence as an engineering and business center. The community offers a mix that represents some of the healthiest industries in our country. Several universities and a technical college are located in the community.

The school district is the largest in the state and the 62nd largest public school system in the nation. It offers an array of programs to meet the needs of more than 54,000 students. Six magnet schools offer specialized and accelerated programs to students within the district. The school district spans 800 square miles and consists of 103 schools and facilities. All of the schools are accredited

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by the State Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. There are 54 elementary schools in the school district. The recent increase in population has caused a rise in student enrollment. Statistics in Report Card (1994), a brochure published by the school district, report that the rate of enrollment is increasing from 600-700 students to more than 1000 students each year. It is projected by the year 2000 enrollment will exceed 62,000.

Among the 54 elementary schools in the district, eight of the elementary schools are located within the city limits. Of the eight city schools, three of the schools are magnet schools. Many of these schools are located in low-socioeconomic communities. Twenty percent of the children under the age of five live in poverty. Based on their Comprehensive Skills Assessment Battery test scores, 26% of first graders are not ready for first grade when starting school. More than 10% of all first graders repeat first grade. One out of every four children is considered at risk within the school district (Williams, 1994).

Description of Work Setting

The writer's work setting is a city school that serves more than 430 students. The doors of the school opened to students in 1952. The school serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The school population consists of 54% white and 46% minority students. The minorities include

African American, Hispanic, Oriental, and Asian Pacific children. Forty-three percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch.

The school is located in a neighborhood. Many students walk to school. About 150 students are bused into the school. Families in the community range from lower to middle class. Approximately 28% of the parents work in professional or supervisory positions. The majority of the parents are blue-collar workers. In most homes both parents are working. The school has strong community and parental support. For the past 25 years the school has had 100% PTA membership. The school's mission is "to provide, in partnership with the home and community, a safe, nurturing environment where all children can learn and prepare to be confident, and caring, lifelong learners and productive citizens" (See School Mission, Appendix A).

Writer's Role

The writer is a first grade teacher in an elementary school. The writer holds the degree of Master of Arts in reading education with additional course work. The writer has also met state certification requirements in elementary education, early childhood education, Reading Recovery, and reading education. In staff development, the writer has delivered inservices on whole language, the integration of language arts, Reading Recovery methods in the classroom and family literacy. The writer has also presented at community

educational conferences. The writer is associated with many professional and community organizations and serves on many of their committees.

Past employment experiences include teaching at the second and fourth grade levels, serving as a school-based reading specialist and as a full-time Reading Recovery teacher. Presently, the writer is completing her second year as a first grade and Reading Recovery teacher. The writer's other responsibilities include serving on the Shared Governance Committee, the Reading and Writing Committees, the school's technology team, and Chairperson of the Steering Committee for the five-year study conducted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem solved in this practicum was first grade students had few opportunities to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writing.

Problem Description

First grade teachers did not plan time for daily writing for authentic purposes. Therefore, students in the first grade did not write for authentic purposes on a daily basis. Handwriting instruction had taken precedence over writing for authentic purposes. The emphasis in the past had been mainly on the writing product as opposed to the writing process. First grade teachers had given writing assignments to students rather than have them choose their own topics.

Students needed to learn how to self-assess their writing. Therefore, students needed opportunities to self-assess their writing. The emphasis was on teacher assessment of students' writings. Students had not been given opportunities to self-assess their own writing. All forms of assessment had been teacher directed. When first grade students were given opportunities to write, their writing was filed in writing folders. The students did not revisit a written piece to reread it for self-assessment or for enjoyment.

No attempt was being made to solve this problem. One

reason was lack of first grade teaching experience. Three of the first grade teachers had completed their second year in first grade. One first grade teacher was completing her first year as a first year teacher. Most of the first grade writing curricula had been textbook driven with a large amount of instructional time spent on the mechanics of handwriting.

Problem Documentation

Several sources of evidence supported the existence of the problem of first graders having few opportunities to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writing. They included teacher lesson plans, teacher questionnaires, informal teacher interviews, grade level long range goals, and teacher observations of students' writing portfolios.

A review of the four teachers' daily lesson plans indicated that only 30 minutes was spent on writing within a week. After examination of these lesson plans, the writer noted that children were given a teacher selected topic on which to write. The children were then given 30 minutes to write on the topic. Each child was asked to file this writing in a writing folder. The written assignment was dated and read by the teacher. The students were given their writing folders at the end of the year to take home and share with their parents.

After reviewing responses to teachers' questionnaires

and informal teacher interviews, the writer observed that teachers allow for authentic writing less than one day per week (See Appendix B for Teacher Questionnaire). First grade teachers also stated that they provide the writing topics for this 30 minutes of writing. Informal interviews revealed that teachers in the first grade had not participated in writing workshops to learn about ways to teach writing (See Appendix C for Interview Questions).

Grade level long range goals and plans showed that the four first grade teachers did not set long range goals for writing compared with other subject areas. A review of long range goals and plans also showed that there are no written goals or plans for writing.

An examination of 75 students' writing portfolios indicated that students were not self-assessing their writing. Students were not encouraged nor did they revisit their written projects to self-assess for strategies that good writers used. Furthermore, they did not publish their stories for others to enjoy. The teacher filed them to be sent home at the end of the year.

Causative Analysis

The problem that first grade students had few opportunities to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writing had several major causes. A primary cause contributing to the problem was that handwriting instruction was taking precedence over writing for authentic

purposes. Students in the first grade were spending a minimum of 20 minutes per day on handwriting instruction. Teachers were placing a greater emphasis on the mechanics of good handwriting than on students writing for their own purposes.

A second cause of the problem was lack of time. Teachers did not have enough time in the day to teach writing for authentic purposes. First grade teachers were responsible for teaching many subjects in the curriculum. There were time requirements for each subject. However, there was not an allotment of time required for writing as a subject. All these subject requirements had to fit within a six-hour school day. Because time was limited, first grade teachers had placed writing for authentic purposes and student self-assessment behind other subjects. The 20 minutes of handwriting instruction placed time restraints on teachers to have enough time in the day for authentic writing.

A third cause was reading and writing were taught as isolated skills. First grade teachers did not integrate the two subjects. Most of the school day was spent on reading instruction. First grade teachers were failing to make the connection between reading and writing.

A fourth cause of the problem was many educators believe that children should learn to read before learning to write. First grade teachers felt a greater importance

for students to be better readers than writers. The majority of the school day was spent on reading instruction.

A fifth cause of the problem was teacher education institutions have not prepared teachers to understand a sound rationale for writing instruction or to teach writing for authentic purposes. The local school district had added to the problem by not providing ongoing staff development for teaching writing. These teachers had not had opportunities to participate in workshops on writing literacy. Therefore, first grade teachers felt that they were not adequately prepared to teach writing for authentic purposes.

The final cause dealt with the issue that teachers were confused about how they should judge writing competence. Students' writings can be complex and difficult to assess. Teachers were also confused about criteria for students to use in self-assessing their written work.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A wealth of research supported the problem of children having few opportunities for writing for authentic purposes and self-assessing their writing. Graves (1994) believes that the problem with writing is no writing. Too often teachers fail to establish ongoing routines in the classroom that invite and require writing (Temple, Nathan, Burris, & Temple, 1988). Typically, children compose very little in schools. The writing done is tightly controlled by

the teacher who initiates writing tasks; determines audience, purpose, and format for the writing (Lensmire, 1994).

A review of the literature suggested that young children want to write and possess knowledge, interests and experiences about which to write (Avery, 1993). However, teachers do not provide adequate time for children to write. Usually writing assignments are predetermined by the classroom teacher. Children seldom have opportunities to write about their own experiences. Graves (1994) believes that all children have experiences to write about. They do not need fancy toys or to go on elaborate vacations to find topics. Clay (1991) feels that children's writing becomes real and interesting to them when they have their own purpose for doing it.

Unfortunately, writing instruction in schools has often focused primarily on the technical skills of penmanship; in these schools children rarely have the opportunity to actually think, compose or write (Cunningham & Allington, 1994). The time spent on practicing penmanship often replaces writing for authentic purposes. Routman (1988) believes that practicing writing through exercises, skill sheets and isolated activities does not produce good writers. To find time to write, teachers must look at their schedules to realistically evaluate not only what they teach and the time they allocate to each subject, but also the

work they require of students in teaching each subject (Hollingsworth, 1988). Writing is not an activity to be done only once a week or at a certain time of the day. Writing should occur throughout the day and should be an essential part of the curriculum.

Just as children learn to read by reading, they learn to write by writing (Williams, 1995). Furthermore, reading and writing are not separate activities; development in one area enhances development in the other. Reading and writing develops simultaneously. The process does not begin at a particular age. It develops as children gain experiences with language and print (Schickedanz, 1986). Allington (1983) believes that children must be engaged in real-life writing and reading experiences. Children experience greater success when reading print that flows from their natural language. Graves (1983) found when children receive positive feedback they become confident risk takers and develop healthy attitudes toward writing.

Smith (1988) states that everything children need to know about writing they could learn from authors. Children need to look analytically at literature from a writer's point of view. It helps them to internalize characteristics of quality writing which in turn will show up in their own writing.

Managing writing at any grade level and in any subject area requires that teachers understand process-based writing

and that they use writing as an essential tool for teaching and learning (Calkins, 1986). Once teachers have children put meaning on paper with confidence, they can assist children in editing so that the meaning is clear. The problem with writing is not spelling, punctuation or handwriting. The problem is not allowing children the opportunities to write for authentic purposes. When students write about things that matter to them and that they know about, they welcome the rehearsing and drafting stages for the chance to better express how they feel and say what they know (Temple, Nathan, Burris, & Temple, 1988). Avery (1993) found that children need experiences in the process of using written language. They need to be involved in the revision and editing of their work. With guidance, writers at the early fluency level can begin to revise their work in a more substantial way.

First grade students should have many opportunities to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writing. This literature review supported the belief that children should be encouraged to write daily for authentic purposes. Children should be encouraged to write often. Many times teachers fail to establish daily routines that encourage writing. Basically the problem with writing is not giving students opportunities to write.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The goal of the writer was that first grade students would have increased opportunities to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writings. It was the belief of this writer that increased opportunities for students to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writing would also increase the students' literacy levels.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. Following implementation of this practicum, a review of the four teachers' lesson plans will indicate an increase spent on writing during a week's time from only 30 minutes to 120 minutes.
2. After implementation of this practicum, a review of the four teachers' questionnaires will indicate that teachers increased the amount of time writing for authentic purposes from less than one day a week to four days a week.
3. Following implementation of the practicum, a review of each of the four teachers' long range goals and plans will indicate that teachers have written at least four long range goals and plans for the teaching of authentic writing and the use of self-assessment.

4. After implementation of this practicum, a review of students' portfolios, using the following rubric, will indicate through specific examples of evidence that a minimum of 50 out of 70 first grade students are self-assessing their work to at least a moderate level.

Rubric for evidence of self-evaluation in the portfolio:

No Evidence	Some/Meager Evidence	Moderate Evidence	Substantial Great Deal Evidence
0 Specific Examples	(1-2) Specific Examples	(3-4) Specific Examples	(5 or more) Specific Examples

Measurement of Outcomes

The first outcome of this practicum that teachers' daily lesson plans will indicate an increase spent on writing during a week's time from only 30 minutes to 120 minutes was measured by documentation. The writer kept a weekly record of the number of minutes spent on writing. This documentation was recorded weekly throughout the duration of the project.

The second outcome that teachers' questionnaires will indicate that teachers increased the amount of time writing for authentic purposes from less than one day a week to four days a week will be measured by teachers' responses to completed questionnaires. First grade teachers were given a teacher questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire were compared with the results of the questionnaire given at the beginning of the practicum. The teachers rated how

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they had increased the amount of time spent on writing for authentic purposes.

The third outcome that teachers' long range plans and goals will indicate that teachers have written at least four long range goals and plans for the teaching of authentic writing and the use of self-assessment was measured by documentation of teachers' long range plans and goals. Before beginning the school year first grade teachers wrote long range plans and set long range goals for this writing project. These plans were reviewed weekly to ensure that all first grade teachers were implementing them.

The fourth outcome that students' portfolios will indicate specific examples of evidence that 50 out of 75 students are self-assessing their work to a least a moderate level were measured by using a rubric. Teachers used the rubric to assess students' written work. Students used self-assessment forms to assess their written work (See example of Student Self-Assessment Form, Appendix D). Students and teachers were encouraged to use post-it notes attached to their writing as another means of self-assessment. These notes indicated an area that the child noticed that he or she had improved. Students were also encouraged to orally tell their teachers steps they had used when self-assessing their written work.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Statement of Problem

The problem solved in this practicum was first grade students had few opportunities to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writing.

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

First grade students had few opportunities to write for authentic purposes. The literature offered several possible solutions to help children write for authentic purposes on a daily basis. Teachers need to show children why writing matters in their lives, and how they can draw writing from everyday experiences (Graves, 1994). Teachers need to write themselves and then invite children to do what they are doing.

When teachers write with the children, their stance on learning and the world change (Graves, 1994). By modeling, teachers can show children how to select topics from the ordinary events of their own lives and how to expand them. Graves (1994) believes that being a writer yourself is perhaps the most important thing one can do to help children learn to write. Calkins (1986) found when teachers model how writing is done rather than simply evaluating a piece, teachers find that students enjoy writing and learn more. Gradually children will begin to write with greater interest and with stronger voices. When children see adults writing

for a variety of purposes, they discover ways in which writing is useful and meaningful (Dailey, 1991).

Langer and Allington (1992) found that teachers that have the most success in teaching children to write are often seen modeling and talking about what they are thinking as they are writing. Children who have difficulty writing will learn how to write well when they watch their teacher write and edit day after day. Calkins (1991) believes writing is lifework not deskwork. To teach children the impact writing has upon their lives, teachers must first realize the impact it has upon their lives as teachers.

Writers need a genuine purpose for writing. It needs to be real and natural. Routman (1991) believes our focus must be on writing for real purposes. Knowing about writing is not enough. Teachers must attempt to link learning to real-life purposes (Lewin, 1992). The writing that goes on in the classroom must be relevant to the students if they are to value the process. Atwell (1989) believes that a writing program works when teachers establish an environment that encourages writers to discover and act upon their own intentions and interests. It is important that children have a sense of what writing can do. Writing helps them to transcend themselves in space and time (Graves, 1991). Writing can connect a child to their past.

Children learn because they take an active role in

their own learning. They learn how to evaluate their own work, plan new learning and make effective choices in the topics they write about (Graves, 1991). Fresch (1995) believes as children make choices, experiment with reading and writing, and have many opportunities for feeling successful, they expand their own literacy learning. Children need to realize that writing provides information for their own thinking. Writing helps children clarify what they are thinking and learning. It gives them opportunities to become actively involved in their learning(Bunce-Crim, 1992).

Routman (1991) believes we need to look at our classroom schedules and try to put writing at the center of the curriculum. Giving students frequent opportunities to write is important. It is vital that children see themselves as writers (Schroder & Lovett, 1993). Teachers should take the time to plan the classroom writing environment carefully. Atwell (1989) believes that writing programs are successful when teachers carefully plan the writing environment so students know what to expect and what they expect of them.

Hansen (1987) found even when children have compelling reasons to read and write, they probably will not unless they have dependable, structured time to do so. However, children have trouble controlling time in their writing. They simply do not see it as an element of control.

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Fletcher (1993) believes writing teachers need to be aware of the tiniest break-through their students make to allow the amount of time needed for writing.

Writing every day helps develop thoughtful readers and thoughtful writers. Children who write become better readers. Allington (1989) found in classrooms where children understand that reading is one of the most important ways to become a good reader, teachers will find is easy to help children understand the parallels between how reading helps a person become a better reader and how writing will help improve both reading and writing. One of the most powerful connections a teacher can make is to connect reading and writing. Research has shown a clear benefit from connecting reading and writing (Shanahan, 1988).

In most classrooms writing occurs after reading (Cunningham & Allington, 1994). Writing before reading is another way to get children thinking. Teachers can enrich their students' writing by teaching them to read with the sharp eye of a writer. Allington and Cunningham (1994) found when teachers engage the children in a writing activity before or after reading, they increase their ability with and connection for both reading and writing.

Clay (1993) believes children need to emerge from the early years of school with a control of the language of instruction. Students need to be well on the way to

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becoming the kind of reader whose reading improves because he reads and on the way to becoming a writer. Teachers can use writing as a tool for teaching skills and materials that they are already teaching. Writing becomes a vehicle for learning a way to express what is known and a way to speculate about what is not known or understood (Hollingsworth, 1988). Dailey (1991) believes the school's writing program can be extended into the home. Research indicates that children engage in literacy events more in the home than in school. Learning to write is mostly an act of discovery. Children can discover how to write if adults surround them with print and encourage them to produce their own print(Temple, Nathan, Burris & Temple, 1988).

Students' self-assessment of their writing is challenging and an important part of the writing process. When students compile their writing into portfolios, they are in fact conducting an extensive self-assessment of their progress(Farr, 1993). Stowell and Tierney (1995) believe assessment practices in writing should engage students in ongoing learning, reflecting, evaluation, and goal setting. When young writers evaluate themselves, they are allowed to discover their own strengths and weaknesses. This allows them to control aspects of their own learning and that kind of empowerment leads to more enthusiastic writing (Bunce-Crim, 1992).

Children need to have the opportunity to set a piece of

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writing aside and revisit it again later. Revision is fundamental to most good writing. Donald Murray calls revision "central to the act of discovery" (1990, p. 171). Butler and Turbill (1987) believe the act of writing is a process not a product. Young writers become very particular about correct mechanics and that their understanding of mechanics increases both by their own editing and by seeing final corrections in the published piece (Avery, 1993).

After reviewing the literature the writer started a writing program that encouraged daily writing for authentic purposes and increased opportunities for students to self-assess their writing. The writer believed that this program would work in the writer's school. The population was suitable for this program. First grade teachers were eager to start a writing program that encouraged authentic writing and student self-assessment. The writer was fortunate to have a supportive principal and staff that were involved in this project. There were also parent volunteers that were eager to help in the classroom during the writing block. There was also a nursing care facility next door to the writer's school that was eager to have students from the school develop a buddy system with some of the elderly patients. The project included three first grade teachers, parent volunteers, one school-wide reading specialist and senior citizens living in a nursing care facility next door to the school.

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The writer and another first grade teacher had written an Alliance Grant. This grant provided funds for any materials needed for this project. The writer's school also allocated funds to help defray any cost.

Description of Selected Solutions

There are several solutions the writer chose to implement. The writer served as a leader on the first grade team in carrying out the writing program. This project served as a framework for encouraging students to become writers.

The writer planned for children to write daily for authentic purposes and encouraged student self-assessment with the use of portfolios. All first grade teachers met weekly to plan each week's daily writing block. The writer also gave teachers materials to aid children in self-assessing their writing.

A critical component of this practicum was to involve parents in their children's writing education. The writer conducted a writing orientation for first grade parents explaining the writing strategies implemented. Parents were encouraged to attend conferences quarterly. The children shared their writing portfolios with their parents during the conference. Many parents volunteered during the daily writing block. This allowed for more individualized attention during the writing block.

Another solution the writer attempted was to attend

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workshops and local conferences on writing. First grade teachers visited an elementary school to observe students engaging in authentic writing in a first grade classroom.

The writer also recorded observations on each child's progress in the writing program (See Appendix for Writing Record Form). These observations were shared with parents during conference time. First grade teachers also shared observations with each student weekly.

For the duration of the project the writer individually assessed students' written vocabulary and sounds heard in dictation monthly. The two assessments followed Clay's (1993) assessments used in the Reading Recovery program. Teachers observed students as they wrote words and sentences. This writing was a good indicator of the child's knowledge of letters and the left-to-right sequencing behavior required to read English. Students also were given weekly "quick writes" to assess their written vocabulary. Each week students were given ten minutes to write independently as many words possible. The number of words written were counted and recorded. The goal was to increase the number of written words weekly.

First grade teachers were asked to complete the same questionnaire they had completed at the beginning of the project. The results of the questionnaire were compared with those obtained at the beginning of the project. Table 1 presents teacher responses to the teachers' questionnaire

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before and after implementation of the project.

Table 1

Responses to teacher questionnaires before and after practicum implementation.

Questions	Responses before Implementation	Responses after Implementation
Students write for real purposes	Rarely	Always
Students' writings are based on topics they select	Never	Always
Students are encouraged to self-assess their writings	Never	Always
Student portfolios are used as a means of assessment	Never	Usually

At the completion of the project the writer shared the results with teachers, the reading specialist, the district curriculum coordinator and the school principal. Parents were also encouraged to share their children's writing success at an Author's Tea Party.

Report of Action Taken

The writer served as a transformational leader while doing this project. It was the writer's hope that the children would develop a love for writing and realize the value of writing. Donald Murray often says that the role of the teacher of writing is to laugh and cheer (Murray, 1990).

This practicum was shared with first grade teachers,

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parents, the reading specialist, the district curriculum coordinator and the school administrator. The writer was a leader in implementing the practicum and a resource for teachers, administrators and parents.

The first responsibility of the writer was to provide first grade teachers with resources and materials on implementing authentic writing instruction and encouraging student self-assessment. First grade teachers read Cunningham and Allington's book, Classrooms That Work: They Can All Read and Write. This book was an excellent resource for implementing writing into a daily schedule. After reading the book all first grade teachers met to discuss ways of implementing a daily writing block. As a team all first grade teachers developed long range plans and goals for the writing curriculum. These long range plans were referred to weekly when writing weekly lesson plans.

The writer's administrator also felt that writing was a priority for all students. The writer's school was fortunate to have Dr. Dottie Hall provide an extensive workshop on writing. This workshop was conducted during the school day where teachers could watch Dr. Hall model writing lessons with their students. This workshop provided first and second grade teachers with more knowledge about teaching writing.

A critical step in the implementation of this practicum was educating parents about the writing curriculum. During

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open house PTA the writer conducted a writing orientation for first grade parents explaining the writing strategies that would be implemented in first grade. Parents were also provided with a school brochure explaining the reading and writing curriculum. Parents were asked to purchase a bound notebook for their child to be used as a daily writing journal.

Each individual student's writing levels were assessed the second week of school. Students were given a writing vocabulary assessment and a dictation assessment. These assessments provided a baseline of each students' writing ability beginning first grade. Students were reassessed monthly to chart their progress.

At the beginning of the year the daily writing block was 30 minutes gradually increasing to 45 minutes. The writing block always began with the teacher modeling a mini lesson. This mini lesson focused on editing skills, topics to write about, capital letters and punctuation. Following the mini lesson students wrote in their notebooks. Students in the class were assigned a day of the week. On Monday the teacher worked with the students in the Monday group. The teacher rotated to a new group each day of the week. After writing three stories, students could choose a story they would like to publish. Before publishing a book the students had to self-edit, edit with a friend and finally edit with the teacher or parent volunteer. The published

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books were shared with the class, book buddies, parents and with adopted friends at the nursing home next door. Many books and students' writings were displayed in the halls and on the Principal's Writing Wall for others to enjoy.

Along with the daily writing, students were encouraged to write at home. Students were introduced to take home book bags with book characters and journals. Students were encouraged to play with the book characters and to write about their adventures in the journal. Weekly, students wrote a question to their parents in their written conversation books. These books were taken home and the parents answered their child's question by writing back to them in their conversation books. The students then read their question and their parent's response. Many parents made positive comments about these weekly writing assignments. They were amazed with the things their child chose to ask.

Throughout this practicum all first grade teachers met weekly to discuss successes and concerns about the writing curriculum. The first grade teachers also met with the second grade teachers every other month. These meetings were beneficial in targeting areas to improve upon. The cross-grade planning will also provide a smoother transition for students entering the second grade next year.

For the duration of the practicum first grade teachers conferenced with students weekly. During these weekly

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conferences the teachers took detailed notes on each student's progress. Students became very knowledgeable in their self-assessing skills. During the conferences students often referred to their self-assessment sheet (See Appendix D). Students often made comments such as, "I remembered to leave space between my words," and "I began my sentences with a capital letter and ended them with a period." Students were encouraged to comment to classmates after they had shared a written piece. The students' comments became very detailed and focused. Comments often given were, "I like the way you stuck to your topic," or "Your pictures go with your story."

Parent conferences were held twice during the practicum. Students were encouraged to be active participants in their parent conferences. Each student met individually with the teacher before the conference to decide which writing pieces they would like to share with their parents during their conference. This allowed each student a chance to be the star and shine.

A major step in this practicum was increasing first grade teachers' knowledge of process writing and the teaching of writing to first graders. First grade teachers attended two writing workshops that dealt with writing strategies and time management of the writing block. The writer attended the State Writing Conference and visited a model school that had received the State Writing

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Award.

The writer incorporated computers into the writing program. Students had the opportunity to compose on the computer. Computer programs such as the Children's Writing and Publishing Center and Storybook Weaver were used by the students. Students also composed and sent E-mail letters to their parents and to Santa.

At the completion of the practicum the writer administered the same questionnaire to first grade teachers given at the beginning of the practicum. These results were compared. First grade classes held an Author's Tea Party to celebrate the students' accomplishments in writing. Each child chose their favorite writings to share with their parents.

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Chapter V: Results

Results

The general setting for this practicum was a city elementary school that serves more than 400 students while the specific setting was three first grade classrooms that served 60 students. The problem solved through this practicum was that first grade students had few opportunities to write for authentic purposes and to self-assess their writing. The writer believed that by increasing the opportunities for daily authentic writing and student self-assessment, students would increase their literacy.

The outcome measures were as follows:

1. Following implementation of this practicum, a review of teachers' lesson plans will indicate an increase spent on writing during a week's time from only 30 minutes to 120 minutes.

This outcome was met.

First grade teachers have exceeded this outcome. Students wrote 225 minutes weekly. Each first grade classroom devoted 45 minutes daily to writing for authentic purposes. The writing block began with a five minute mini lesson where the teacher modeled a planned topic (e.g., self assessing strategies, choosing a topic, types of writing, etc.). This mini lesson was usually done on a blackboard or an overhead projector. During the 45 minute writing block

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the teacher conferenced with four or five students each day to assess and monitor each student's writing. The writing block ended with four or five students sharing their writing with the class. Each student then called on several classmates to respond to the piece they had read.

2. After implementation of this practicum, a review of teachers' questionnaires will indicate that teachers increased the amount of time writing for authentic purposes from less than one day a week to four days a week. This outcome was met.

Teachers' questionnaires indicated that teachers increased the amount of time writing for authentic purposes from less than one day a week to five days a week. A minimum of 45 minutes a day was devoted to the writing block. Teachers and students enjoyed their daily writing time. Many students became upset if other school activities interrupted their writing time. One first grade student suggested that they also become writing buddies with their book buddies. The writer agreed and encouraged students to spend a few moments each week writing with their book buddy. This writing activity helped to increase a special friendship among the first grader and their fourth grade book buddy. First grade students were also encouraged to write letters to their book buddies through the "Wee Deliver" school postal system.

3. Following implementation of the practicum, a review of

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teachers' long range plans and goals will indicate that teachers have written long range goals and plans for the teaching of authentic writing and the use of self-assessment.

This outcome was met.

All first grade teachers wrote long range plans and goals for the teaching of writing for authentic purposes and student self-assessment. A review of teachers' long range plans indicated that first grade teachers set specific goals for writing and guidelines for student self-assessment for each month. These long range goals were reviewed weekly by first grade teachers when writing weekly lesson plans. These plans were shared with the principal.

4. After implementation of this practicum, a review of students' portfolios, using the following rubric, will indicate specific examples of evidence that at least 50 out of 70 students are self-assessing their work to at least a moderate level.

Rubric for evidence of self-evaluation in the portfolio:

No Evidence	Some/Meager Evidence	Moderate Evidence	Substantial Great Deal Evidence
0	1-2 Specific Examples	3-4 Specific Examples	5 Specific Examples

This outcome was met.

A review of students' portfolios indicated that at least 50 students are self-assessing their work to at least

a moderate level. A majority of students were self-assessing their work for spacing between words, capital letters and the correct punctuation at the end of sentences. At the completion of the practicum at least half the students were self-assessing their work for misspelled words and paragraph format. All of the first grade teachers observed that by the completion of the practicum the teacher's role of editing a student's written piece had diminished or was almost not needed. Students were becoming so self efficient in editing their own written pieces there were few mistakes to correct with the teacher.

Discussion

The specific outcomes that the writer planned to achieve were met through the implementation of this practicum. The goal of this practicum was to improve first grade writing literacy through authentic writing and student self-assessment. The goal was achieved by giving students daily writing time that encouraged authentic writing. Students were taught self-assessing strategies that could be applied to their writing.

Graves believes if students are not engaged in writing at least four days out of five, and for 35 to 40 minutes, beginning in first grade, they will have little opportunity to learn to think through the medium of writing (1994, p.104). First grade teachers in this practicum scheduled writing five days a week for 45 minute periods. At the

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beginning of the project students were encouraged to write for 30 minutes daily. As the year progressed this writing period was increased to 45 minutes. By integrating the curriculum teachers found the time to allot 45 minutes to daily writing. Routman (1996) calls this the seamless curriculum. This integration required fewer separate classes and longer uninterrupted blocks of time.

As much as possible teachers in this project modeled themselves as a writer. Teachers did real writing of letters, poems and stories of their real life experiences. Teachers always did this modeling at the beginning of the writing block on an overhead projector. By doing this, students could see their teacher struggling with topics, thinking aloud, revising and editing. Atwell (1995) reminds us that we only have to write a little better than our students do for them to take something away from our demonstrations.

By teaching students to self-assess their writing they began to talk about their work in a way that showed more depth and insight. The control of the learning shifted from the teacher to the student. Students became independent thinkers. This change in learning opened the doors for student success. Collins (1992) believes when children succeed, the teacher succeeds. When the teacher succeeds, the world succeeds. When the world succeeds, we find peace. Where we find peace, we find love. Where there is love, all

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things are possible (p.89).

Teachers in this project met regularly to discuss concerns and to share ideas about the daily writing time. Teachers also met across grade levels to discuss grade level concerns and to provide for a smoother transition from grade to grade. These meetings provided collegial collaboration, reflection and sharing.

Recommendations

The writer suggests the following recommendations when implementing a writing program for young children that encourages authentic writing and student self-assessment.

1. The teacher should model writing daily. This gives the students the opportunity to view their teacher as a writer.

2. Provide an audience for the students. Students can share their writing with a friend, teacher, parent or principal. The students in this practicum also shared their writing with nursing home patients located next door to the school.

3. Encourage parents to be active participants in the writing block. The extra adults can be a tremendous help when managing the writing time. Parents in this practicum were encouraged to volunteer during the daily writing time. Parents were also encouraged to write weekly with their children.

4. Establish a classroom community at the beginning of the project. Establish classroom expectations, procedures, room

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arrangement and rules for the writing block. Implementing a daily writing time can be very difficult unless students control and manage their own behavior and respect one another.

5. Encourage students to write in many genres. Teach students to write poetry, letters, greeting cards, memoirs and much more.

6. Model sharing and response. Show the students how to conference effectively with each other. Teachers in this practicum chose to have sharing time at the completion of the daily writing block. Each first grade teacher modeled genuine and helpful responses to the content of the students' writing.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum report have been disseminated using a variety of sources. The practicum was explained throughly to the school faculty and principal at a faculty meeting. The writer demonstrated a model writing lesson and provided teachers with materials to encourage self-assessment.

The writer organized a workshop for parents to encourage authentic writing at home. Parents from all grade levels attended the workshop. Parents of first graders were explained the purpose of the practicum.

Other means of disseminating the success of this practicum was through sharing the writing program with other

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teachers from other schools within the district. Four schools sent first and second grade teachers to observe the first grade writing program. The writer also presented workshops for schools in neighboring school districts.

Throughout this practicum, the writer communicated the success of the project to the writer's administrator and the reading specialist. The success of this practicum was also shared with the district curriculum coordinator.

The writer plans to present the writing program at summer workshops for the school district. The writer will provide teachers and administrators with ideas that encourage students writing for authentic purposes and self-assessing their work.

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APPENDIX A

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Appendix A

School Mission Statement

The mission of Summit Drive Elementary is to provide, in partnership with the home and community, a safe, nurturing environment where all children can learn and prepare to be confident, caring, lifelong learners and productive citizens.

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APPENDIX B

WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Dear Teachers,

As we evaluate our writing program this year please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Please respond by circling the rubric practice that corresponds to your practice.

1. Students write for real purposes (journals, personal and class experiences, notes, letters).

Never	Rarely (Less than 1 day per week)	Sometimes (1-2 times per week)	Usually (3-4 times per week)	Always (Daily)

2. Students' writings are based on topics that they select.

Never	Rarely (Less than 1 day per week)	Sometimes (1-2 times per week)	Usually (3-4 times per week)	Always (Daily)

3. Students are encouraged to self-assess their writings.

Never	Rarely (Less than 1 day per week)	Sometimes (1-2 times per week)	Usually (3-4 times per week)	Always (Daily)

4. Student portfolios are used as a means of assessment.

Never	Rarely (Less than 1 day per week)	Sometimes (1-2 times per week)	Usually (3-4 times per week)	Always (Daily)

5. In the stages of the writing process I have taught the following stages in the past two weeks. Check those that apply.

_____prewriting _____editing _____proofreading
_____drafting _____revising _____publishing

6. Of the writing my students have done in the past two weeks it has been for the following audiences. Check those that apply.

_____themselves _____parents _____friends
_____authors _____community helpers _____siblings
_____persons outside of the school

Thank you!

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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Appendix C

Interview Questions for First Grade Teachers

1. Do you plan for daily writing in your classroom?

2. Do you write long range plans for writing?

3. Do children in your classroom self-assess their own writing?

4. Have you taken any course work or workshops on writing in the past three years?

APPENDIX D

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

Appendix D

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

NAME_____ DATE_____

I wrote about_____today.

I remembered to leave spaces between my words today.

YES_____ NO_____

I remembered to begin my sentences with capital letters.

YES_____ NO_____

I remembered to use the correct punctuation (.,!,?)at the end of my sentences.

YES_____ NO_____

I need help with_____.

Tomorrow I plan to _____.

APPENDIX E

WRITING RECORD FORM

APPENDIX E

Writing Record Form

DATE	STUDENTS	TOPIC	COMMENTS